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ABSTRACT

Following a brief review of research and literature regarding the needs of secondary school substitute teachers, suggestions for helping these teachers do an effective, professional job are offered. Research indicates that understanding of the subject matter along with understanding of various learning approaches enhances the substitute teacher's professionalism and makes the job easier. Other environmental factors such as class size, student abilities, time of year, and day of week affect the responsiveness of students to learning and to the substitute teacher. Substitute teachers must show the same degree of good judgment skills and flexibility as the full-time teacher. In short, effective, successful substitute teaching seems to require an expansion and magnification of effective characteristics of all teachers. (CB)

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Dimensions of Needs In Secondary Substitute Teaching

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Dimensions of Needs In Secondary Substitute Teaching

By

Seta Margo Dilanian M. A.

Like viewing history of substituting through a kaleidoscope the role of a substitute teacher has been one of slow changing perspective. Nevertheless, substituting is an exciting and frustrating field of work. It is a totally spontaneous experience, each day filled with the unexpected.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The following questions are explored in the papér. What are the effects of a short term temporary teacher on pupil learning? What elements must a teacher be knowledgeable of inorder to function effectively as a substitute teacher? How can the district, the various staffs, and the substitute teachers increase the quality of life and education in the schools? The purpose of this writing is to present elements necessary for endurance as a teacher, a substitute teacher, and as a person simultaneously.

REVIEW OF SOME RELATED LITERATURE:

The literature analyzed here covers articles pertaining to many aspects of substitute teaching. The articles discuss the specific effects on the students, the regular teaching staff, and the substitutes.

Rebecca Feldman (1981) investigated the factors which contribute to problems in on-call substitute teaching programs. She found that the secondary role of the substitutes effected the inter-relationship between the pupils' and the substitute teacher. Feldman validates the notion that attitudes of the students, plus those of the substitutes, as well as the regular teaching and administrative staffs are the cause of functional problems in the teaching environment.

The study of David Dillon and James B. Parsons (1978) indicate problems exist for the substitutes as they take over a class as well as leave the class. The time dimensions correlate highly with the ratio of a successful day.

They mention also the need of many new teachers of using the substitute teaching position as a way to gaining a full time position. The route they diagram helps to explain the developmental steps of professional growth for the teacher.

Lind L. Woods and Thomas L. Woods (1974) investigation indicates a vacuum occurs in the socialization pattern of substitute representatives at various levels of our educational bureaucracies. It appears a more vital active need remains for substitute representatives in the educational systems.

DEFINITION AND ANALYSIS:

By definition substituting refers to the act of serving in the place of another. The act of one certified teacher replacing another certified teacher for a time is called substitute teaching. The term "impromptu substitute teacher" ,IST, though, seems to be a more appropriate designation for the job. The analysis that follows attempts to note the differences and similarities between the two areas of regular and substitute teaching.

Probably the most distinct differences faced in work by the substitute teachers from the regular contract teachers are total spontaneity of assignments, along with unfamilar lesson plans to be taught, with materials the substitutes are often unaccustomed to using exactly. Secondly, the IST accepts

assignments, while, lacking immediate knowledge of class membership, the students level of skill development, and the regular teacher's specific schedule for a given day.

One can see the only real preparation the IST takes to each assignment is his/her own personal development. These wide areas of background preparation include the substitute's own areas of expertise, knowledge, and experience.

Similarities between the two types of teaching are in the area of preparation. Since, certification through teacher training programs provide the formal source of teaching strategies and approaches which can be utilized effectively in regular contract teaching as well as substitute teaching situations.

These strategies are related to areas of lesson preparation, direct teaching of lessons, as well as class management and supervision. In such a manner, a direct parallel exists between regular teaching and IST.

PREPARATION:

Generally speaking, it is wise to prepare for substituting days by having a specific alternative lesson plan in mind to teach, in the event the regular teacher was not able to prepare an effective assignment. A IST must be creative, "on

the spot". An example of a quickly prepared emergency assignment would be for the substitute to provide the class with a topic sentence which they (the students) would use to develop an essay. This type of assignment should be due at the end of each time period, and adjusted for the particular age level, as well as subject matter being studied.

AWARENESS OF RESOURCES:

Upon entering a school building the impromptu substitute teacher should become aware of the resources available. The initial starting place being the general office. From the office the substitute can be made aware of emergency phone numbers, names of school officers, names of team leaders or department heads, and other relevant information.

On arriving in a classroom, the substitute ought to locate materials to be used that day. The tasks of reviewing lesson plans, locating seating charts and record books are the substitute teacher's main concerns in the minutes before classes.

As a courtesy measure to the regular teacher and the school administration it would be well advised to begin preparing a report of the day's activities. The written

report should be submitted to the general office at the end of the day's assignment.

Moreover, statements concerning disciplinary problems, work assignment accomplished, and student attendance during the classes can be included in it. This account may include the substitute teacher's tactful suggestions and comments that may be helpful to both the regular teacher and the administration in carrying out their responsibilities. In many school districts a report sheet is provided by the school administration for the substitute teacher, hence, the IST maintains communication with the staff, students, and building administrators.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER'S BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM:

As class begins, identify yourself by placing your name and the date on the chalkboard. The next task of the substitute is to get the attention of the class and to maintain a classroom atmosphere for learning. A crucial time which will often determine how the hour will proceed. Since, teaching is impossible without good classroom management. Consequently, the impromptu teacher must possess

attributes of being gentle, kind, and patient. Therefore, a rapport for teaching and learning must be instantly established with the students. A task that is not easy to accomplish at times.

SOME RULES FOR SURVIVAL:

Greeting the students at the door often starts the learning process of connecting a name and a face for the substitute teacher in a positive manner. After the students are in their assigned seats, state clearly, your name and take the attendance. At the time of roll call the IST ought to try to learn the names of the students. The availability of a seating chart makes the task a little easier. The knowledge of being able to identify the students makes a big difference in maintaining a good class.

At the outset, the IST should clearly and honestly communicate to the class a set of rules for the time they share together, thereby, establishing a routine. The present method is one way that this writer has found effective in establishing a working relationship with a large class. It is imperative from this point on that the substitute teacher abides by these

rules throughout the class period, thereby, gaining the respect of the students and setting the foundations for the class period.

Simultaneously the substitute teachers should control their voice, for the level of one's voice seems to correlate with the response of the students. As one stops and lowers his/her voice, the students seem to be more responsive to listening.[1]

In this manner, the impromptu substitute teacher establishes his/her presence with confidence in managing the class. An example of the suggested rules may be, " Inorder to accomplish the stated purpose of the lesson, deviant behavior by students would be reported in various ways."

First, a warning is given to the student of the misbehavior. The second time, the student misbehaves his/her name goes on a list for detentions. The third rule applies if the student's behavior becomes more positive during the remaining time in the class. As a result of the improved behavior, the student's names is taken off the list, otherwise, the detention remains. The fourth point applies if the student's misbehavior completely deterior ates, at which time

the student is sent to the office immediately. Soon the substitute teacher will develop a reputation as a working teacher among the students.

Finally, once their day's work assignment has been completed, at that time only, the class is entitled to be given the last ten minutes as leisure time within the perimeters of the classroom.[2]

LESSON PLANS CONFRONTED:

Those assignments that are outlined in detail by the regular teacher of a specific day's work seem to be the most successful to teach by the substitute teacher.[3] These plans include both a learning segment as well as a written and/or oral exercise segment which ought to be due at the end of the day or hour.

In other words, a more favorable response is received by the students when a revised version of a regular lesson plan is left. Some teachers provide outlines of lessons on paper for the substitute, while, others write them on the chalkboard, or use an overhead projector for both the students and the teachers. Each of these alternative eliminates misunderstanding of the assignment by all those

concerned. The classes seem to accept the assignments of the regular teacher without dispute. The assignments of a substitute teacher, particularly at the secondary level, are often rejected by the students for lack of power in grading.

A high school social studies teacher provides a yellow notebook for the substitute teacher. The notebook includes all the information for the day. The contents of the notebook are in plastic sleeve pages consisting of four sections.

1. A section of general directions to the substitute regarding attendance, assignments, and students' behavior. It includes also detention rules and forms, the office phone numbers, as well as, her own home phone number.

2. A section consists of titles of textbooks used by the classes and their location, as well as, the day's schedule.

3. A section consists of seating charts for each hour. The plastic pages in this section allows for an easy method of taking attendance.

4. A section consists of other information such as air raid drill locations, and fire alarm locations, plus other important sources.

At the same time, she has outlined on the chalkboard the lesson plans for the week for all to see, along with a hand written version attached to the record book on her desk for the su bstitute teacher.

STUDENTS' NEEDS:

The most crucial element in the success of all teaching,

regular or impromptu substitute teaching, is the response of the students. The best plans of teachers can go astray if the students decide, for whatever reason that they do not want to learn.

Young people may challenge the authority of the substitute teacher.[4] A sense of humor can go a long way with such classes.[5] This skill, coupled with the ability to be firm and businesslike in pursuing the instructional objectives will help in the survival of the substitute teacher in the job. A very delicate balance for the teacher to maintain but vital to increase student learning under the supervision of a temporary teacher.

Young people during the adolescent years need to feel someone cares enough to set perimeters of guidelines for them in learning.[6] Otherwise, students can engage in a series of contagious misbehavior acts creating confusion for the hour which ultimately could effect the entire day. When students do not know what to expect in their classes, they feel out of control. Teachers can help students have a greater sense of control by using requests rather than commands, giving students choices in class requirements, explaining assignments

so students know their purpose, and using feedback from the students to improve the class when possible.

Some excellent ideas concerning the satisfaction of students' need with a temporary teacher were presented by students of a middle school business classes. Their suggestions included a number of points.

1. The students appreciate a learning assignment which directly involved them with the content, not a lesson presentation of just busy work.
2. Many young students wanted free time to have the opportunity to play games or write on the chalkboard.
3. Most young students wanted free time to socialize with each other.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER'S NEEDS:

Similar to the students' needs, the impromptu substitute teacher also has needs and responsiblities. The substitute teacher is a professionally trained teacher without a contract.

The substitute teacher is a teacher. They know how to teach. The IST needs to feel a sense of worth and acceptance as a professional. They have the desire also to leave the school day with a sense of accomplishment.[7]

For a IST to survive, certain attributes and attitudes are necessary for them to maintain an equilibrium. These

individuals should be willing to learn, make a commitment to young people, and to education.

LINES OF STAFF COMMUNICATION:

Communication among the school district staff can have a positive effect. For example, when a regular contract teacher appears at the classroom door demonstrating supportive service to a colleague, a disorderly class seems to return to proper classroom behavior patterns.

The staff member's actions demonstrate acceptance of the substitute teacher as a professional to the class.[8] Hence, learning occurs more effectively, leading to a more pleasant day for all concerned. For this reason making friends and acquaintances with members of the teaching and administrative staff, along with other substitutes can be an asset. As well as stimulating a source of future assignments for the temporary teacher.

The IST should be aware of other teachers in neighboring rooms. They should introduce themselves to the other staff members when the opportunity presents itself. Let the regular teachers know who he/she is, be polite and friendly. Yet, the substitute should maintain professional dignity

and never indulge in idle talk about other teachers, schools, or students.

Of course, there is no substitute for good communications and reasonable lesson plans provided by the regular teacher for the day. These elements make a vital difference in the reception of a class to learning.

NEW AND FUTURE TRENDS IN COMMUNICATIONS:

On a district wide basis, within the district of this writer's work, a new organization was created in 1980. The Education Association of the district with seed maney had established a substitute teachers' association. The new association was chartered by the state and registered.

The association was created specifically for the purpose of salary negotiation, inservice training sessions, improvement of plans, and generally sharing of ideas. The organization has become a means of opening formal lines of communication between the administration, teachers, and substitute teachers , along with other district associations. New networking lines were created with various other district associations eliminating somewhat the vacuum that a substitute teacher generally exists in. Many future possibilities become available with this action.

The substitute teachers' association has brought guest

speakers to discuss matters of practical concern for educators as to what is expected of them as responsible professionals. This method has allowed an exchange of information for negotiation purposes, activites, as well as, the possiblities of future advancements as teachers. The practical, and insightful meetings have served as a useful tool to eliminate misunderstandings among the various levels of professionals in the district. Thus, the ultimate goal of providing meaningful learning experiences for the pupils in the district each day is strived for by the total staff of the district. Consequently, the stereotype substitute teacher roll has been alter slightly.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

In essence, understanding of the subject matter along with understanding of various psychological learning approaches for the different ages of development enhances a teacher's professionalism and makes teaching easier. Hence, the substitute teacher is able to present information to young people in ways that they can comprehend, along with skills to conduct effective class sessions.

One should keep in mind that each class possesses its

own composition of members. Therefore, each class has its particular personality traits which often determines the kind of behaviors exhibited. Other environmental factors such as the day of the week, the time of the year, along with the weather conditions outside, all go into play in determining the responsiveness of students to learning.

Similarities between regular teaching and substituting exists in various areas of development. Experiences have demonstrated that both types of teachers must act with traits of good quality judgement. Each time they interact with the students and their environment they must act with understanding and commitment to the objectives. Decisions made by the teacher should be based on rational, sound, and prudent thought.

At the same time, the characteristic feature of versatility is demonstrated each time a regular teacher accepts a new class assignment or monitors a school activity. In a similar manner, as a substitute teacher, one must be flexible, agreeable, patient, and adventuresome, since, everyday is a new schedule of assignments.

In conclusion, the characteristics of a teacher seems to be intensified and magnified during substituting. While, one's

physical and mental stamina as a substitute teacher are placed under various levels of stress. Therefore, the substitute teacher needs to get enough sleep and be in good health to meet the challenges of each day.

Generally speaking, it can be stated that there are no truly resistant students only unaware, inflexible teachers. As an impromptu substitute teacher the rate of time it takes to establish one's presence and purpose becomes significant in determining a successful day of teaching. Because the needs of numerous people are involved in the educational delivery system, a multitude of dimensions must be satisfied for a successful day of teaching to occur.

FOOTNOTES

[1]E.H. Henrikson, "Comparison of Ratings of Voice and Teaching Abilities", Journal of Educational Psychology, 1943, pgs. 121-123.

[2]Lee and Marlene Canter, Assertive Discipline (Santa Monica, Calf.), 1975.

[3]Jane Power, "There's No substitute for Preparation", NEA Today Jan./Feb. 1984, p. 19.

[4]Lucella Cole and Irma Nelson Hall, Psychology of Adolescence (New York, 1970), p. 579.

[5]Ibid, p. 578.

[6]Ibid, p. 577.

[7]Lucella Cole and Irma Nelson Hall, Psychology of Adolescence (New York, 1970), p.577.

[8]Jane Power, "There's No Substitute for Preparation", NEA Today Jan./Feb. 1984, p. 19.

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